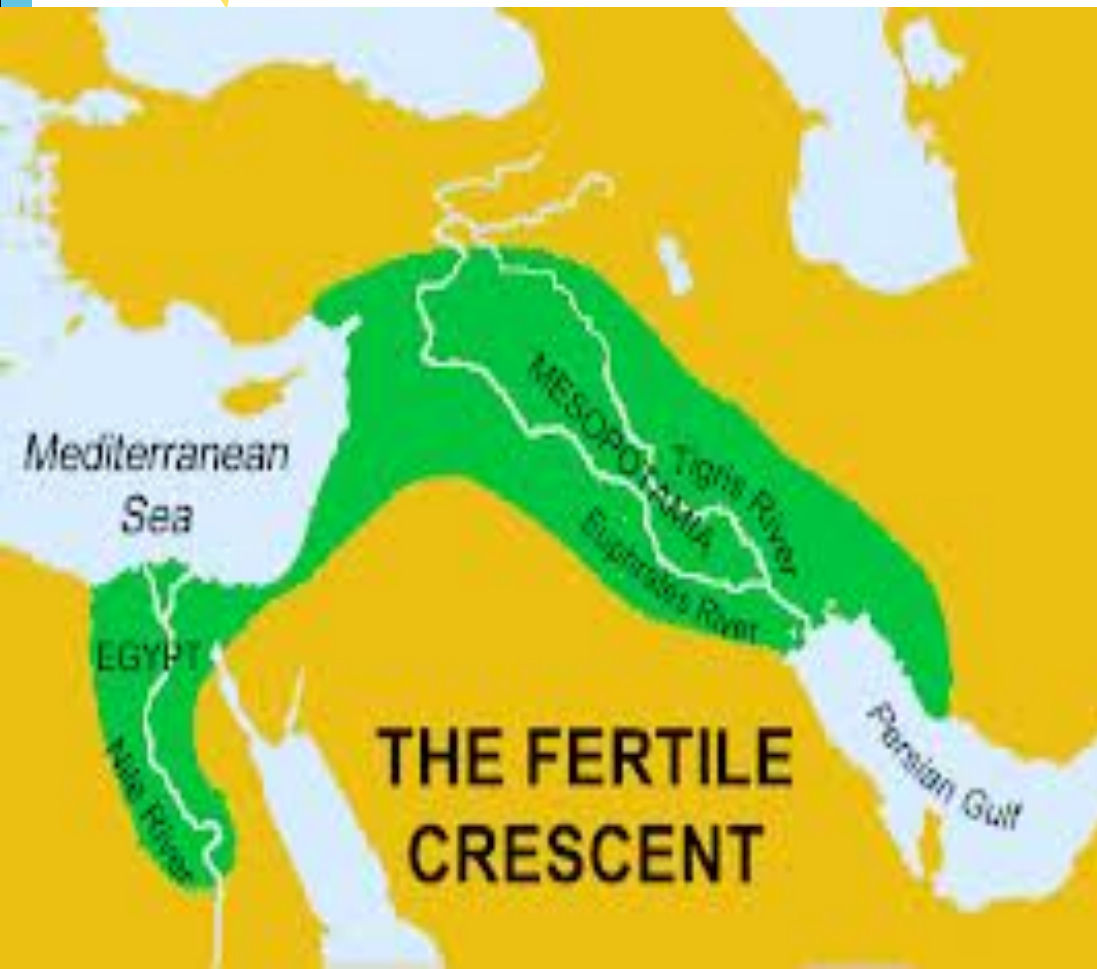


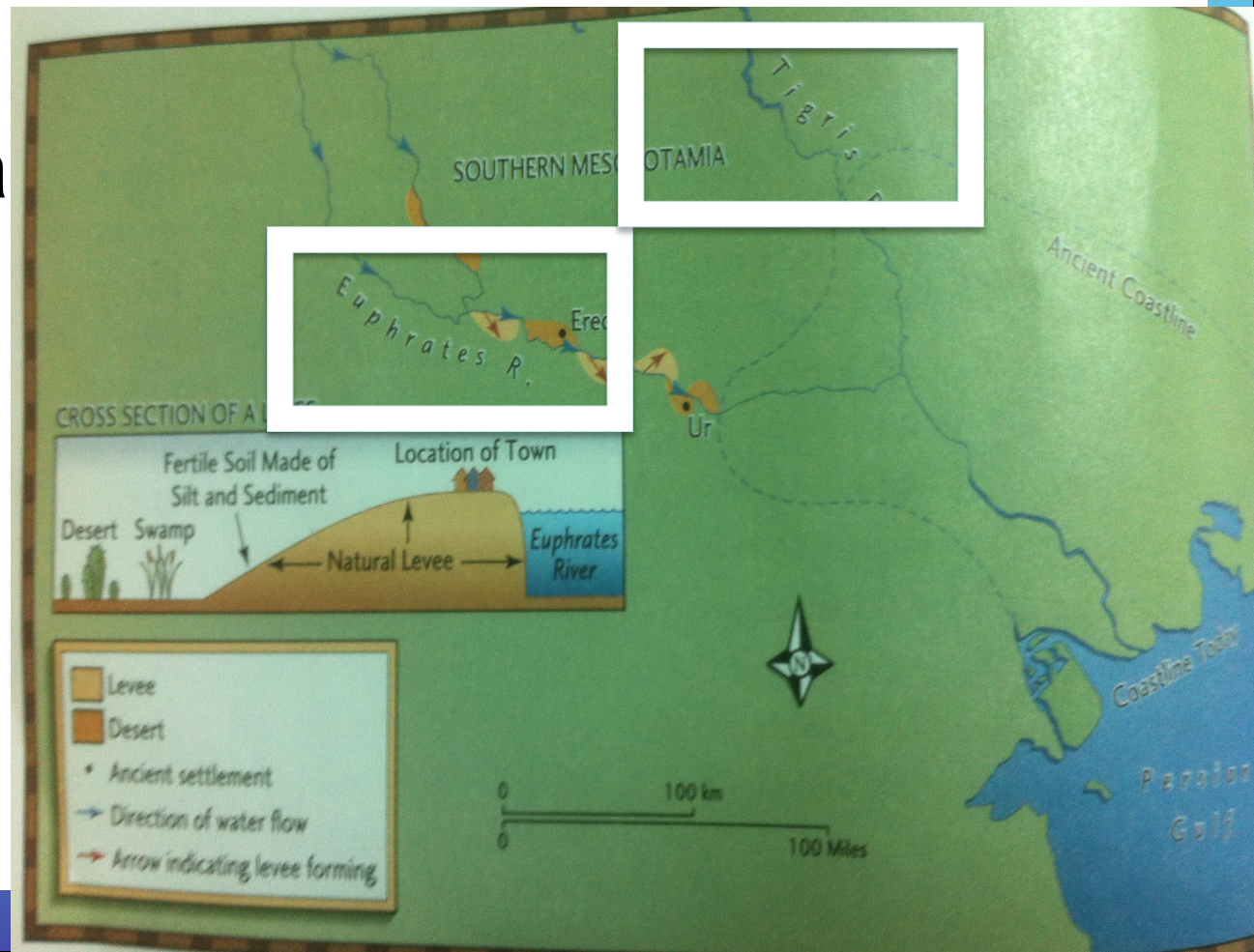
1.4 Mesopotamia: The Cradle of Civilization

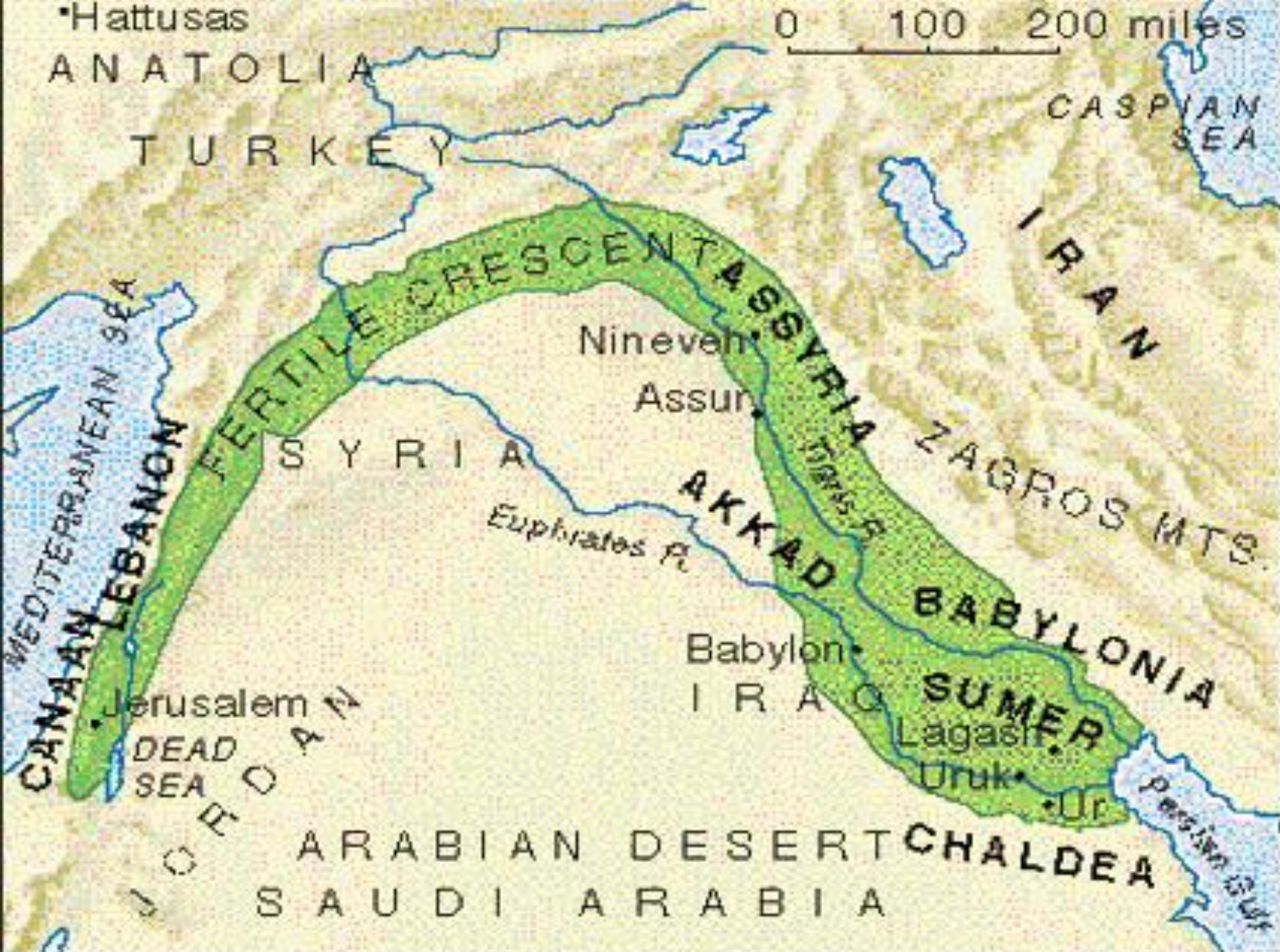


A contemporary map of Iraq and the surrounding region showing Mesopotamia (literally, "between rivers").

Mesopotamia

- The earliest of all civilizations
- “Mesopotamia means land between the rivers





Mesopotamia

- Tigris and Euphrates Rivers (present day Iraq)
- Revolutionary change
 - Codified Laws
 - Concept of Kingship
 - Building of places to worship Gods
 - Writing developed
 - Wheel

Mesopotamia

The Area

- Too little rainfall for
- The climate is too



and



Mesopotamia

The Area

- And if not taken care of properly the



becomes fertile

Mesopotamia

The Area

- The Land contains no

and almost no



or



for
building

Mesopotamia

The Area

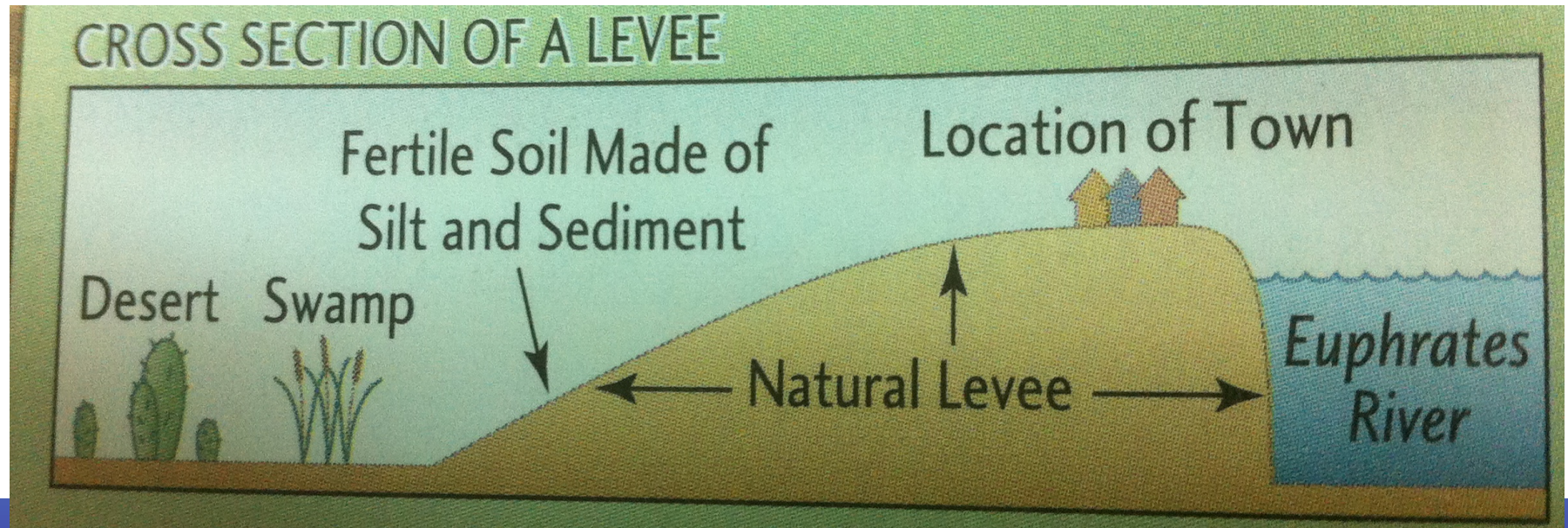
- Summer weather
- During the winter



Mesopotamia

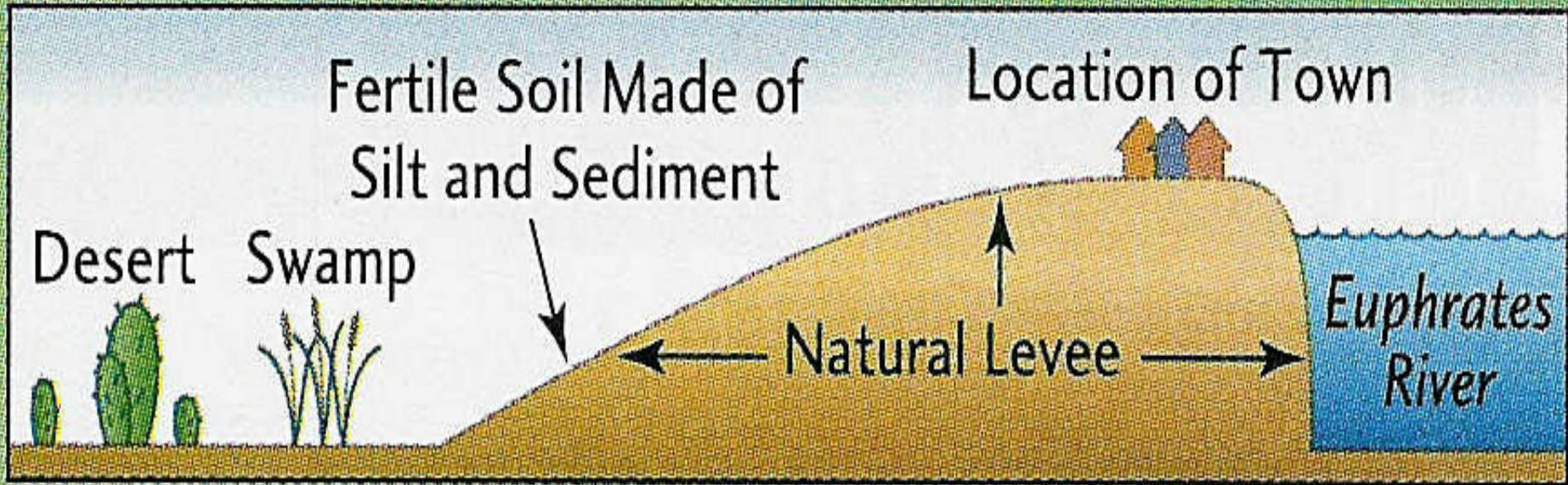
The Area

- So what attracted settlers to this area?
- Answer: The natural levees along the Euphrates river



Natural Levee

CROSS SECTION OF A LEVEE



- create a high and safe flood plain
- make irrigation and canal construction easy
- provide protection
- the surrounding swamps were full of fish & waterfowl
- reeds provided food for sheep / goats
- reeds also were used as building resources

History of Mesopotamia

- Over the centuries, many different people lived in this area creating a collection of independent states
- **Sumer**- southern part (3500-2000 BCE)
- **Akkad**- northern part (2340 – 2180 BCE)
- **Babylonia**- these two regions were unified (1830-1500 BCE and 650-500 BCE)
- **Assyria**- Assyrian Empire (1100 -612 BCE)

Religion



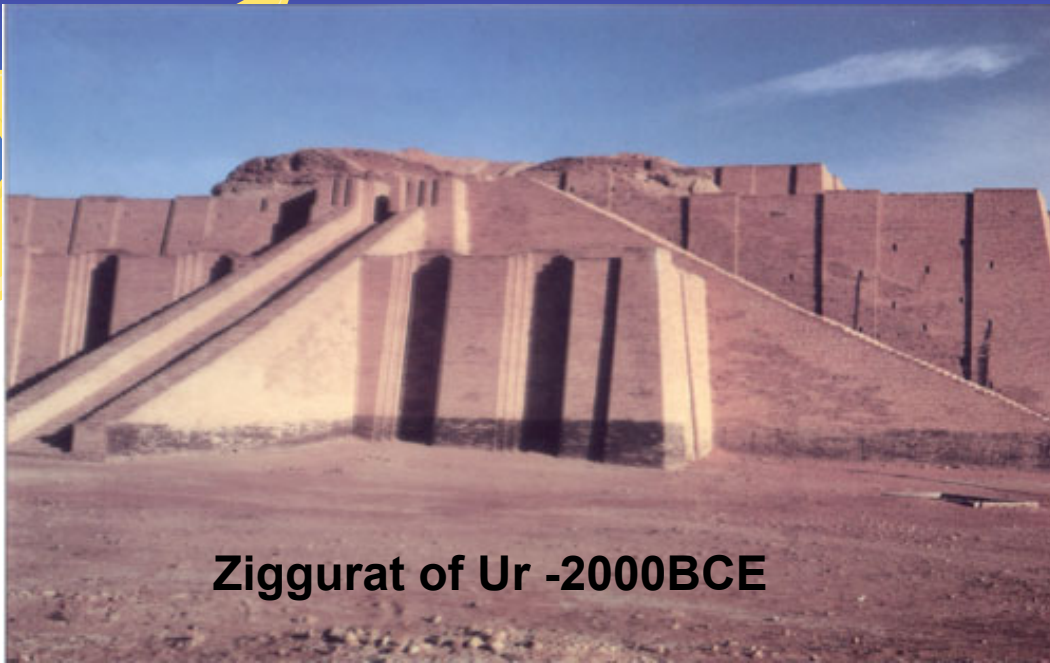
gods were worshipped at huge temples called ziggurats

➤ Polytheistic religion consisting of over 3600 gods and demigods



- Position of King was enhanced and supported by religion
- Kingship believed to be created by gods and the king's power was divinely ordained
- Belief that gods lived on the distant mountaintops
- Each god had control of certain things and each city was ruled by a different god
- Kings and priests acted as interpreters as they told the people what the god wanted them to do (ie. by examining the liver or lungs of a slain sheep)

Ziggurats



Ziggurat of Ur -2000BCE



- Large temples dedicated to the god of the city
- Made of layer upon layer of mud bricks in the shape of a pyramid in many tiers (due to constant flooding and from belief that gods resided on mountaintops)
- Temple on top served as the god's home and was beautifully decorated
- Inside was a room for offerings of food and goods
- Temples evolved to **ziggurats**- a stack of 1-7 platforms decreasing in size from bottom to top

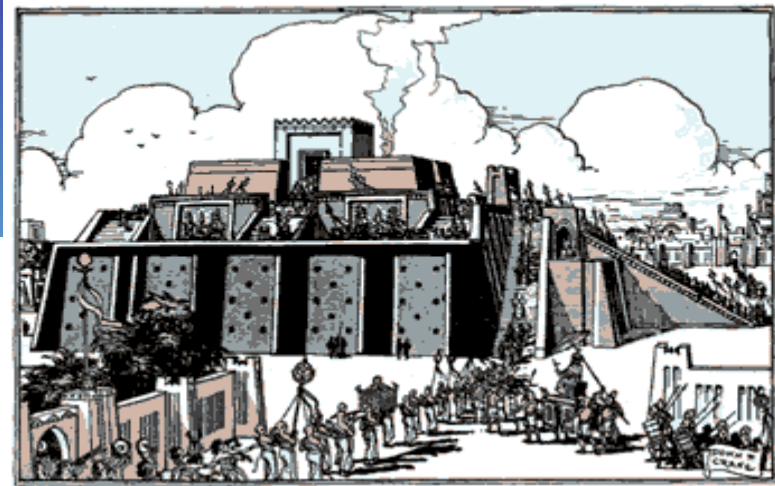
Government

- Political structure an early form of democracy
- Frequent wars led to the emergence of warriors as leaders
- Eventually rise of monarchical system
- co-operation was the basis of government
- Followed leadership of god of the city which was interpreted by a council of leading citizens > or > priests > or leader of the city (ie. king)



Sumerians

- social, economic and intellectual basis
- Irrigated fields and produced 3 main crops (barley, dates and sesame seeds)
- built canals, dikes, dams and drainage systems
- develop cuneiform writing
- invented the wheel
- Abundance of food led to steady increase of population (farm, towns, cities)
- first city of the world
- Developed a trade system with bartering: mainly barley but also wool and cloth for stone, metals, timber, copper, pearls and ivory
- Individuals could only rent land from priests (who controlled land on behalf of gods); most of profits of trade went to temple
- However, the Sumerians were not successful in uniting lower Mesopotamia



Akkadians

- Sargon unified lower Mesopotamia (after conquering Sumerians in 2331 BCE)
- Established capital at Akkad
- Spread Mesopotamian culture
- However, short-lived dynasty as Akkadians were conquered by the invading barbarians by 2200 BCE



Babylonians



KING HAMMURABI' S BABLYON

- **Babylonians reunited Mesopotamia in 1830 BCE**

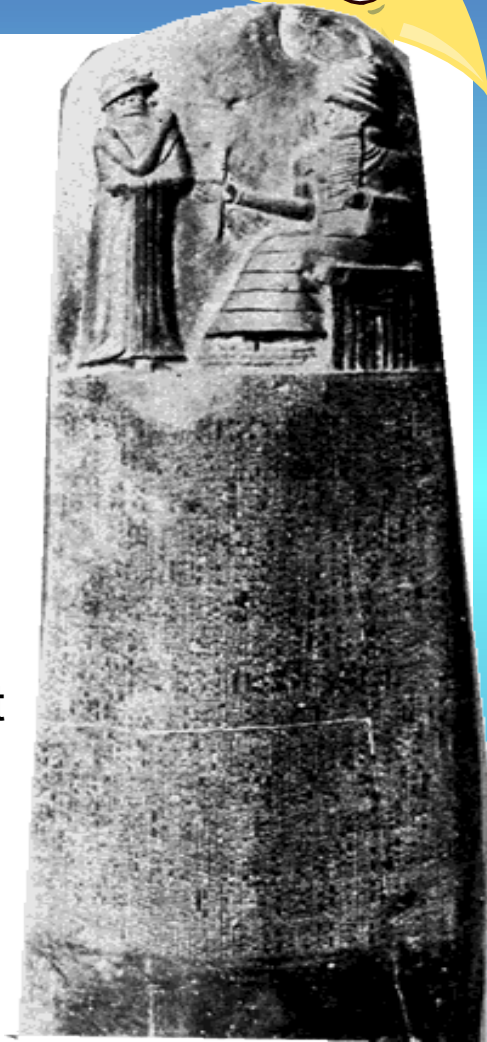
- **central location dominated trade and secured control**

- **YET AGAIN, Mesopotamia was not unified for long...**

- Hammurabi built new walls to protect the city and new canals and dikes to improve crops
- Economy based on agriculture and wool / cloth
- individuals could own land around cities
- Hammurabi' s Legacy: *law code*

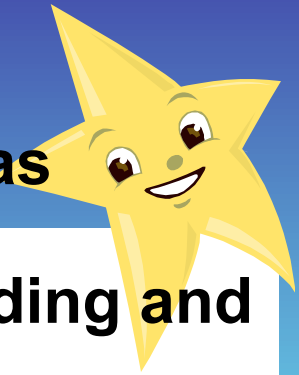
Code of Hammurabi

- To enforce his rule, Hammurabi collected all the laws of Babylon in a code that would apply everywhere in the land
- Most extensive law code from the ancient world (c. 1800 BCE)
- Code of 282 laws inscribed on a stone pillar placed in the public hall for all to see
- Hammurabi Stone depicts Hammurabi as receiving his authority from god Shamash
- Set of divinely inspired laws; as well as societal laws
- Punishments were designed to fit the crimes as people must be responsible for own actions
- Hammurabi Code was an origin to the concept of “eye for an eye...” ie. If a son struck his father, the son’s hand would be cut off
- Consequences for crimes depended on rank in society (ie. only fines for nobility)





Assyria



- 10th century BCE, Assyria emerged as dominant force in the north
- City of **Assur**- became important trading and political centre
- After Hammurabi's death, Babylon fell apart and kings of Assur controlled more of surrounding area and came to dominate
- Made conquered lands pay **taxes** (food, animals, metals or timber)
- Rule by fear as kings were first to have a **permanent** army made up of professional soldiers (estimated 200 000 men)
- Made superior weapons of bronze and **iron**
- iron changed lifestyles in Mesopotamia in weapons and in daily life ie. replaced wooden wheels and applied to horse drawn chariots

A rectangular clay tablet with a grid of cuneiform script and pictographs. The script is arranged in vertical columns, with some pictographs interspersed. The tablet is light brown and shows signs of wear and discoloration. The text is overlaid with large, bold, blue letters.

Development

Of

WRITING

Development of Writing

- Click [here](#) to see the development of writing from pictograms to cuneiform



- Pictograms: picture to show meaning
- Ideograms: signs to represent words / ideas
- Phonetics: signs to represent sounds

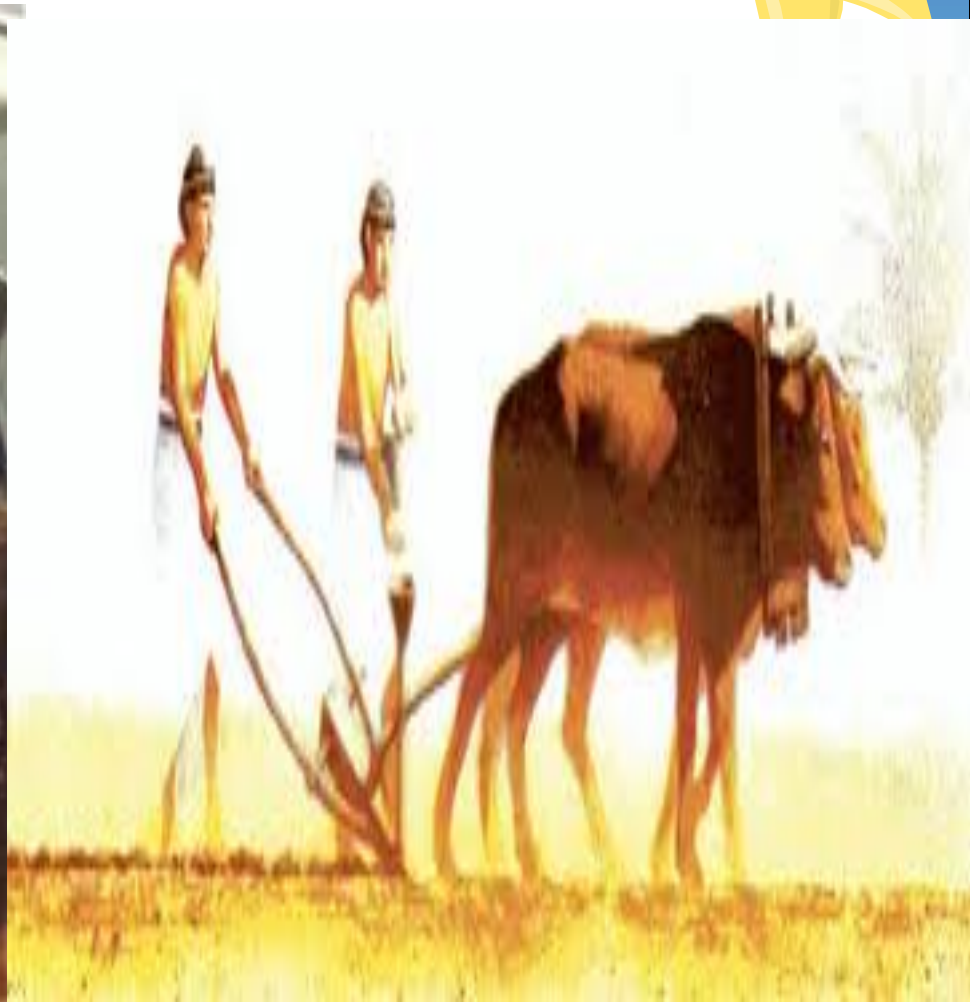
*Phonetics are the basis of most writing systems

Writing



- Greatest contribution of Mesopotamia to western civilization was the invention of writing
- allowed the transmission of knowledge, the codification of laws, records to facilitate trade / farming
- Sumerians wrote on wet clay tablets with the point of a reed > then dried in the sun to make a tablet
- Scribes were only ones who could read and write and served as priests, record keepers and accountants
- As society evolved, the first form of writing was developed called CUNEIFORM (meaning “wedge shaped”), dating to 3500 BCE
- Cuneiform spread to Persia and Egypt and became the vehicle for the growth and spread of civilization and the exchange of ideas among cultures

Science and Technology



Science and Technology



Who was the best?



Sumer

- Closely tied to environment
- Irrigation techniques for farming
- wheel
- Trade- bartering
- Writing- cuneiform
- Religion tied to government as priests and kings made decision for gods
- ziggurats

Babylon

- Production of food through farming
- Private ownership of land vs ownership by the gods
- Developed mathematics and calendar system and system of units for currency
- Hammurabi's law code



Assyria

- **Kings conquered lands to create empire of Assyria**
- **Cooler climate could produce crops with little irrigation**
- **Deposits of ore allowed for development and use of iron**
- **Assyrian army became most effective military force**



Legacies of Mesopotamia



Revolutionary innovations emerged in Mesopotamia such as:

- codified laws
- ziggurats
- Cuneiform
- Irrigation
- Metal working, tools
- Trade
- transportation
- wheel
- Writing
- mathematics
- prosperous living based on large scale agriculture